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PRIVATE
LETTERS

Adapted to

PUBLICK USE,

Written on Occasion of the Assembly's
taking Cognisance of ~~Protestant~~
C——'s Writings.

K
Philothemus
Campbell

WHEREIN

Natural Religion, Enthusiasm and Self-love,
and several other important Subjects are
explicated.

Prov. xv. 32. He who rejecteth Correction, reproacheth his
Soul: But he who beareth Reproof, possesseth Under-
standing.

Prov. xxiii. 23. Buy the Truth, and sell it not; also Wis-
dom, and Correction, and Understanding.



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Advertisement.

Although in Letter N. I. Notice be taken of P—f—r C—l's Writings, yet the Subject of it is more extensive. The P—f—r's Case only gave Occasion, as is hinted in the Title Page, to the publishing of these Letters, which are written upon extensive Views: If any Thing is said in the first Letter, which may be Graveling to the P—f—r, the Author declares he had no Intention to gall, or injure him; They are weighty Considerations, which have induced him to be a little smart upon him, and he hopes it will have no bad Effect: If it takes Trial of his Temper, and upon Trial it appear he can bear a Rebuke, it is no Loss to him, and will rather be a Benefit: If he reflects calmly, considers Things more deliberately, becomes convinced of his Mistakes, and retracts what is a-miss in his Writings, he will thereby establish a good Character to himself, and be valued by all good and wise Men, whose Esteem is of much more Value, than the groundless Applause of others.

Theophilus knows he cannot conceal himself from his intimate Friends; the Manner, the Style, and the Turn of Thought, will easily tell them who the Author is: He has weighty Reasons for concealing himself; and therefore he earnestly requests of all his Acquaintances, that they will not mention his Name to any Body, nor to one another, as the Author of these Letters. As for Philotheus, as his Letters are put into Theophilus's Style and Words, and no Person is in the Secret, he is quite safe and does not fear Discovery.—May they be of Use to the intended important Purposes. It is earnestly prayed for, and 'tis hoped the Prayer is granted.





Private Letters, &c.

LETTER N. I.

Dear Sir,



AM sorry to hear it said, that the late General Assembly has huddled up P—f—r C—r's Affair, without thoroughly canvassing his Writings; and convincing him of a Fault, tho' they gave so much Offence, that the Committee for preserving Purity of Doctrine, found it their Duty to take Cognizance of them. It grieves a well dispos'd Mind, to reflect upon the present State of Religion in *Britain*: How lamentable is it to see *baptised* Men of the reformed Denomination, sapping the Foundations of *Christianity*? I dread the Consequences of it, not with respect to the Danger, much less Ruin of *Christ's* Kingdom and Interest in the World, (a) but with regard to the unhappy Men, who, under various Denominations, conspire to weaken it, and from a just Apprehension, that desolating Judgments will speedily take Place; and put an End to the impotent Attempt: —It is a mighty Privilege to be employed in Opposition to *Satan's* Kingdom; happy are they! who stand ranged under the Redeemer's Banner, when the Adversary breaks in like a Flood, (b) and are active and successful in his Service; not in the Road of angry Contention, terminating in War and Blood, but in the Channel of steady Opposition and meek Suffering. —It is but a faint languid Zeal that burns, alas! in my Breast, yet

(a) See *Matth.* xvi. 18. (b) See *Isa.* lix. 19.

yet am thankful to feel the least Glowing of it, and wish to cherish it; may it be the true Spring of the Proposal I now make! to dedicate our Correspondence upon Religious Subjects to publick Use, adapted to the present State of Things.—I am sensible of how great Use Regularity is in every Thing, and therefore I have laid down a Plan of this Correspondence, whereof this is a Part; That I shall now *class* the *Modern Schemists* in Opposition to true Christianity, under proper Denominations, and *make* a few Reflections upon the P—f—r's Writings and his Explications, and *put it* upon you, to *enquire* into the Source of these Schemes, *state* the Sentiments upon which they are formed and the opposite Truths, *make* Reflections upon them and upon the P—f—r's Writings, and *check* me if I say any Thing a-miss; as the Subject of the first Letter. And promise myself, from the Force of Truth, and the Manner in which it is managed, that *Friends* to Revealed Truth will be encouraged and confirmed, and *Foes* convinced and reclaimed, at least check't from making insolent Attacks upon it.

The *Modern Schemes* in Opposition to Revealed Religion or genuine Christianity, might be aptly class't into *Deism* alias *Sadduceism*, *Carreanism* and *Samaritanism*, on Account of the Affinity betwixt our *Modern Schemists* and the old *Jewish* Sect of *Sadducees*, the later one of *Carreans* and the Mongrel People of old called *Samaritans*; but as Denominations of Sects ought to be obvious as well as proper, I only use them till you furnish me with better. The *Deists* are obviously *Sadducees*, because they deny the Resurrection from the Dead, and the Being of Angels and Spirits; they are fond of being esteemed acute *Reasoners*, who need no Assistance from *Revelation* towards scheming *true Religion*, and Love to call their *Scheme* by the Name of *Natural Religion* in Opposition to *Revealed*. The *Carreans* are Reasoners, who acknowledge nothing in Religion which they do not distinctly understand, or to speak in their Dialect, is not conform to *Right Reason*, i. e. agreeable to their Way of Reasoning, and thus are *Semi-Deists*. The *Samaritans* are Mongrel Professors of *Christianity*, who acknowledge the peculiar Doctrines of it, but conceive and speak of Revealed Truth by *mere Reason's* Powers, rejecting as *enthusiastical* and *whimsical*, *That Knowledge* superior to Reason, but highly consistent with it, which true *Christians* speak of, as common, familiar, and well known

known to them, herein acting the Part of Bigots, and denying what they have as strong Evidence for, as any Fact they credit upon the Report of credible Witnesses ; contrary to the Practice of an ingenious Gentleman of Note, and particular Friend of mine, who declared he could not disbelieve what was told him of this Matter, by Persons of Learning, Judgment and Probity, unless he was to give up with the Grounds upon which the Belief of all reported Facts are founded ; but ingenuously confessed, it was a Kind of Knowledge he did not possess, and could think of it no otherwise than as a *sixth Sense*, they had, which he wanted : They moreover cavil against the Doctrines of *Election* and *sovereign efficacious Grace*, as inconsistent with Reason, and thus are *Semi-Carreans*. *Phariseism*, 'tis true, subsists still, and has great Footing every where in *Christendom* ; but it is a dull stupid bigotted Sect, placing Religion in mere bodily Gestures and Actions, and valuing themselves upon Frequency in these Actions, under the Name of Devotion : They reason so little upon their Principles, that they make little Disturbance in the World, are not at all *Schemists*, and are therefore over-look't in this Correspondence.

I have perused the P—f—r's *inaugural Oration*, glansed his Pamphlet against *Woolston*, and his Book, entitled, *Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue*, and read his Explications of the Remarks made upon them, and cannot find Philosophical Accuracy either in his Notions of Things or Expressions ; on the contrary, I find in his Writings, a Want of Justness of Thought, a strong Itch after Novelty and Applause, and an unbounded Licentiousness of Language, producing indigested Phrases, yea undecent Expressions : See this in the Committee's Remark's throughout ; but take one glaring Instance of Inaccuracy and Licentiousness, in the Account he gives of *Natural Religion* in his *Oration* ; ' He speaks of it as a Law ' founded in Nature, and proceeding from it, consisting in ' the Duties we owe to God and our Neighbour, which are ' to be discharged, that we may commend ourselves to ' the supreme Being, and having spent Life, in observing them, may obtain Eternal Life with God in Heaven ; ' lays down the Being of God, his all-governing Providence, ' the Immortality of the Soul, and a future State of Rewards and Punishments, as the natural Principles upon which it is ' founded. States, its Offices or Duties as not consisting in ' *bodily*

bodily Motions, but *Motions* of Mind, congruous to the
 Appetites of other *Minds*, and subservient to their Felicity;
 which being founded in Nature itself, are obviously unchange-
 able and eternal, and can never be abrogated; terminating
 in the Felicity of all intelligent Creatures. And declares, we
 ought to conclude our *Happiness* to ly as much in discharg-
 ing the Duties of *Natural Religion*, as to depend upon the
 Favour of God: And moreover, that no Heads of *Know-
 ledge* or *Faith*, no *bodily Motions*, or Gestures, by what-
 ever Authority they are commanded, are of any Weight or
 Value in *Natural Religion*, unless they tend to make us the
 more fit and ready to discharge its Offices. These are his
 own Words; Do they not sound harsh? Do they not convey
 to the Reader a Variety of uncouth inconsistent Thoughts?
 Truly they seem to me such a *Hotch-potch* of confused Ideas,
 that I cannot better compare them, than to a born blind Man's
 Philosophical Lecture upon Opticks: What can one say of
 his Way of speaking in the first Part of his Description? Who
 can help thinking he is of Opinion, a Man duly instructed, or
 such a Man as he himself is, can commend himself to the su-
 preme Being, by spending Life in the Observance of the Duties
 of *Natural Religion*, so as to obtain eternal Life with God in
 Heaven? I'm unwilling to suspect him of it, and yet I can
 easily reconcile such a Sentiment with the subsequent Part of
 his Oration, howsoever seemingly inconsistent with it. What
 he says in Opposition to *Tindal*, is Truth, but it is so un-
 luckily express'd, that the Committee were shockt with several
 of his Expressions, and thereby led to attack him where he
 was best able to defend himself, and where his Scope is truly
 laudible and right.—In his *Explications*, I see a Tenaciouf-
 ness, Boldness, and Ardour, such as Men commonly have, who
 vent Crochets, and are exceedingly fond of them; and ob-
 serve a sly Way of sheltering himself under the unguarded
 Expressions of worthy pious Men, who wrote in the last Age:
 He peppers off the Committee, (to use an eminent Gentleman's
 familiar Phrase for once,) with Excess of Words; and when he
 is hard pinch'd, flies to the Ambiguity of a single Word in the
 Expression he has used, and is challenged for—

I do not at all wonder, that these Writings have given so
 much Offence to sober thinking Men, and have come under
 the Cognizance of the Assembly, yet am far from thinking,
 that

that he has adopted the deistical Principles, which his loose Expressions have led some Persons to suspect him of : But am afraid, poor Man ! he has unwarrily taken up some Sentiments concerning *Natural Religion*, *Enthusiasm* and *Self-love*, which are nothing so unfavourable to *Deism*, in their Tendency and Consequences, as they are to *genuine Christianity*. I heartily wish he may be singular in these Sentiments ; but the Strain of many Pulpit Discourses, and the late Attempt to vary and debase the *Westminster Assembly's* Catechism, give too good Ground to fear that it is much otherwise. The sooner you send me your Answer to this Letter, it will be the more acceptable to,

Your afflicted

PHILOTHEUS.



LETTER N. I.

Dear Phil.

WE are *Laicks*, it will be said we are out of our Sphere in writing upon such Subjects : But when the Foundations of Christianity are sap't, and C—y Men instead of appearing in its Defence, chime in with the *Schemists* you write of, and help to undermine it ; it becomes the Duty of every true Christian to write and speak in Opposition to them, as Opportunity offers (a). I am not of Opinion, that the Force of Truth, or Manner of managing a Subject, will ascertain the Success of ones Aims to be useful ; a concurring divine Power upon the Minds of Men, and nothing else, will do it : If our Aim is right and single ; if we write in a calm humble Temper of Mind ; if we are employed and assisted of God ; are solicitous to have his Blessing and Concurrence to attend our Endeavours ; and do truly rely upon it for Success ; we have Ground to expect it, but not otherwise. I approve of your Zeal, and hope tis of the right Kind, may the languid Glow soon

(a) See *Mal.* iii. 16.

soon kindle into a pure Flame : But I'm afraid you'll be thought too warm, *Phil.* it will be said, your Zeal has transported you, and betrayed you into Indecencies : Tho' the P—f—r be in the Wrong, Why so hard upon him ? Sure Severity is not the best Way to reclaim ; Is he not to be pitied rather than blamed ? If the Foible incident to young D—rs, has hurried him to say and state Things, which he himself will not approve of upon strict and calm Reflection ; May we not hope he'll e're long think and act in another Manner ? And if so, ought we not to try to restore in the Spirit of Meekness (a) ? In Compliance with your *Proposal*, and adhering to your Plan, I shall, as the Subject of this Letter, *enquire* into the Source of the Schemes you mention ; *state* the Sentiments upon which they are formed, and the opposite Truths ; and *make* some Reflections upon them, and upon P—f—r C—Is Writings.

The true Source of the *modern Schemes* of Religion, and all other ancient Ones a Kin to them, is *Pride*, and *Self-love* as it now subsists in depraved humane Nature, *alias Selfishness* : This is the Root of *Pelagianism*, or the Doctrine of Rectitude and Morality in lapsed human Nature ; upon which as a fruitful Stem, *Arianism*, *Arminianism*, *Socinianism*, *Deism*, and all the modern Schemes of *meerly Rational*, in Contradistinction to *real* Christianity, are grafted : I need not rake into Antiquity, to shew how *Arianism* got Footing, and the terrible Consequences of it ; I choose rather to restrict my self to the Reformation Period, and observe, That the *Bible-plan* of Religion was heartily embraced by *Luiber*, *Calvin*, *Knox*, and others, who were active useful Instruments in it ; they were truly *Men of God*, peculiarly raised up, qualified and employed by him ; they understood true Christianity, and set it upon its proper Foundation, to wit, *Revealed Truth*, contained in the Bible ; it continued upon that Foundation till *Arminianism* sprung up ; that pernicious Scheme ! soothing to Men, as it indulges them in Self-conceit, and chimes in with the natural Sentiments of depraved Mankind ; soothing and plausible it is ! in so much that it may with much more Propriety be termed the *Religion of Nature*, than Mr-*W—n's* deistical Scheme.— This Leaven, leavened the Reformed Churches, and

(a) Gal. vi. 1.

and produced, first *Socinianism*, and next *Deism*, and now produces the other Sects, which you are pleased not improperly to term *Carreans* and *Samaritans*, but which I choose rather to denominate *Rationalists* and *Schemists*: I need not state the Scheme of *Deism*, which you rightly term *Sadduceism*, but which I choose rather to call it *Antichristian-deism*; it has been so much taken Notice of in Print, and is so much talkt of in Pulpits; I shall only observe, that it came out of the same Forge, and was forged on the same Anvil, as *Atheism*; that mad Scheme gave Place to it, because the Free-thinking Gentlemen, as they were pleased to call themselves, found it was not tenible; Lord *H——t* was the first polite Broacher of it, and Mr. *W——n* polished it, giving it the Name of the *Religion of Nature*, or *Natural Religion*, with great *Impropriety*, in the Sense he means it, but not without *Propriety*, in the Sense I have applied it to *Arminianism*. I dislike the low Wit called Punning, yet take the Liberty to give the Word *Natural* a Turn for once, and say it is indeed the Religion of a *Natural*, i. e. of an Ideot, if he is to venture his eternal Concerns upon it; 'tis a meer Cobweb, finely spun out of the Bowels of the Spinner, but becomes rather a Nuisance, than useful to any significant Purpose: Howsoever some Men may please themselves, in talking of a Connection betwixt *Natural* and *Revealed* Religion. The Sect of *Rationalists* chime in with *Antichristian Deists*, as to Notions of the Deity, as *beneficent* and *good*, inconsistent with just Views of him, as the *Sovereign, supreme* Being; and as to the *Powers of Reason* so much talkt of, and exaggerated; yea, the Doctrine of *Spirits*, and their Agency about Men, and Influence upon them; and is distinguished, by *acknowledging* the Necessity of *Revelation*, *owning* the divine Authority of the *Bible*, and *submitting* to the Christian Institutions; yet disowns the Sublimity and Spirituality of them, and thus makes Christianity no other than a refined System of Morality, published for the Benefit of Mankind, to which if Men attend, say they, and conform their Practice, they shall surely be happy in the other World: These Men are at Bottom *Arians* and *Socinians*, and only disguise their Sentiments. as to our Lord's Divinity, and his Satisfaction for Sin, from secular Considerations. This Sect is too numerous and powerful, had a D——r for its Champion, and has a B——p for its Patron at present,

The

The Sect of *Schemists*, (under which Name I comprehend all profest *Calvinists*, who depart from the Bible-plan of Religion,) chime in with *Rationalists*, as to the Powers of Reason, Force of powerful Motives to Virtue, and unsuitable Notions of divine Sovereignty; and agree with them in debasing Christianity, by substituting *Reason* in the Place of *spiritual discerning*, rightly termed *Intuition*, thus making it a merely *rational* System, to the Knowledge and Practice whereof cultivated *Reason* is fully sufficient; it is distinguished, by *acknowledging* all the peculiar Doctrines of Christianity, and *owning* an Influence of the Holy Spirit upon the Souls of Men, yet levels all to the Perceptions and Powers of *Reason*, and declares for a *new Covenant* with Men, by which all who sincerely repent and *obey* the Gospel, as they love to speak, shall, thro' the Intercession of Christ, surely be saved from Hell, and possess of Heaven; making no Question about Men's Powers to *repent* and *believe*, or *obey* the Gospel; but do not plainly declare themselves on that Point, nor explain the Nature of that *Repentance*, and *Faith* or *Obedience*: These Men are *Arminians* at Bottom, but covertly, because of the Church Standards of Doctrine, which stand in their Way, and therefore has hitherto had no avowed Champions.

The Sentiments upon which the *Schemes* of these several *Sects* are formed, are these, *viz.* *That* there is no other Kind of *Intelligence* among Creatures, different from and superior to Reason; *That* Reason, in the right Use of it, with respect to God, our Neighbour and ourselves, or *right Reason*, as it terminates on Religion, is competent to Mankind, in the present fallen State: *That* Mankind not only ought to be, but actually are governed by the Dictates of *Reason*, when these Dictates are attended to; *That* learned or well educated Men, attending to the Dictates of *Reason*, not only come to know, and rightly understand the Principles of *true Religion*, but become disposed to the Practice of it, without peculiar divine Instruction and Influence; *That* this Knowledge and Practice is aptly termed *Natural Religion*, in Contradistinction to *Revealed Religion*, and differs from it, only in some peculiar
 + Doctrines taught by the *Holy Jesus*; *That Jesus* came into the World to establish a *new Covenant* with Mankind, seal the Truth of it with his Blood, and exemplify Obedience to the Moral Law, by his Life and Practice, and for no other Purpose;

Purpose; *That* in Consequence of *this Covenant*, and of his Sufferings and Intercession, *Repentance* and *sincere Obedience*, tho' imperfect, will be accepted of God, and intitle Men to Happiness; *That* the Arguments drawn from the Advantages of Virtue, and Prejudices of Vice, together with the *Consideration* of the Pattern set us by the *Holy Jesus*, are sufficient to determine a rational Mind, to the Practice of Virtue and Holiness. And *lastly*, *That* the Consideration of the Love of God, the Sufferings of Christ, and the Deformity of Sin, is a cogent, *prevailing* and *effectual* Motive to *true Repentance* and *sincere Obedience*. These Sentiments are certainly false; the opposite Truth, is stated in the following plain Propositions.

Intuitual Knowledge is a Species of Intelligence specifically different from *Reason*, and superior to it. *This Knowledge* arises from divine Influence, was possess'd by *Adam* in his original State, was withdrawn from him upon his Fall, and is restored to *Elect* Men in Regeneration. *Intuition* is perfectly consistent with *right Reason*, and is absolutely necessary towards the right understanding and Practice of *true Religion*. — *Religion* is founded in the Relation of *Creature* to *Creator*, and is the suitable Disposition of an intelligent Creature towards its Creator; and *Natural Religion*, is that Disposition subsisting in such Creatures, as it was *originally* given. *This Disposition* *Adam* possess'd in his *original State*, and became divested of it by his *Fall*. *Mankind* as Descendants of fallen *Adam*, are possess'd of the *Faculty* of *Reason*, and exert it in various Degrees, according to their different bodily Constitutions, and Education. The *Faculty* of *Reason* is capable of concluding with great Force and Clearness, the Being of God, and some of his Perfections, from the Works of Creation and Providence; but few Men, comparatively speaking, are capable of exerting Reason in that Manner. — There is a *Consciousness* of the *Being* of God, and of *moral Good* and *Evil*, common to all Mankind, which is not the Effect of *Reason*, or *Tradition*, to which that *rude Knowledge* of a Deity, and these *lame Notices* of Good and Evil, to be found in all Ages, and Parts of the World, amongst the most barbarous Nations, are owing. That Knowledge and these Notices, never did, never will, nor can rise to the *right Knowledge*

of the living and true God, the Immortality of the Soul, an all-governing Providence, and future Rewards and Punishments, in *any one Man*, be his Reasoning, Capacity and Education, what it will, without the Assistance of *Revelation*, in some Way or other. *Meer external Revelation* will never produce *real Religion*, in the Soul of any of the Sons of *Adam*, without peculiar divine Instruction and Influence. The *eternal Word* came into the World, to make Attainment by his Sufferings and Death for *Elect-men*, in Fulfilment of *his* Part, of the *Covenant of Redemption*, made by God the Father with him, in the Character of *second Adam*, the *federal Head* and Representative of such Men, and of them only. *True Repentance* and *sincere Obedience*, are competent to *renewed Men* only, are Fruits of *his* Attainment, and Effects of *his* Influence by the *Holy Spirit*, upon them, as their *vital Head*. *This Influence* produces *supreme Love* to God, Hatred of Sin, and every other moral Disposition, wherein the Image of God, or, Resemblance to him, in the moral Perfections of his Nature, properly consists.

These Sects bewray great Ignorance of the *Divine Plan* of Things, as it is revealed in sacred Writ, and taught by the *Holy Spirit*, who leads *Elect-men* into all Truth, and teaches them all Things (a): They seem to imagine, that the *Bible-scheme* of *Religion*, as they call it, is not tenible in Dispute; but their *Conceit* proceeds upon no better Grounds, than their Ignorance of it, and the fond Thought that the *wretched Schemes* they have drawn up, are certainly just and right: Mean Time, when the *divine Plan* is delineated and illuminated, and shown to them, they must needs become ashamed of themselves; even as they who lay down a false Hypothesis in any Science, build upon it, and attempt to solve all Occurrences by it, are forced to quit it with Blushing, when they see their Hypothesis quite overturned by repeated Experiments: How extravagant did the Doctrine of *Antipodes* appear to Men in former Ages, who imagined the Earth to be a vast Plain? And how ridiculous is that Conceit to us, who know it to be spherical, and the Doctrine of *Antipodes* to be certainly true? How strange is it, that Men should act with greater Indiscretion in religious Matters, than in other Things? Few Men are so absurd, as to say any Problem in Natural Philosophy is absolutely impossible, only because they do not readily apprehend it, or be-

(a) *John*. xvi. 13.

because it does not agree with their Hypothesis ; yet how common is it for Men absolutely to disbelieve and reject God's Account of Things, because they cannot reconcile it with their Schemes ? Unhappy Men ! who set up a Taper at Noon-day, pretend to be directed by the Light of it, and shut their Eyes against the shining Sun : If the Light that is in Men be Dark-ness, how great is that Dark-ness (a) ? It is a *just* Exception against the Truth of these Schemes, that they are so *easily* formed, and *that* upon this solid Ground, That God's Thoughts are not our Thoughts, nor our Ways his Ways (b) : There is a vast *Depth* in the *divine Plan*, which poor Mortals do not reach, without divine Instruction ; but when it is set in Light, how charmingly beautiful and perfectly consistent is it ? Tho' it has not hitherto been collected into a View, and accounted for, upon the Principles of Reason, yet let not Men think this impracticable ; assuredly that which is indeed perfectly consistent with *right Reason*, can be fully reconciled with its *Principles*, and 'tis more than probable, will ere long be actually done. I shall only add one Reflection more ; The *Transition* from *Arminianism* to *Socinianism*, and from thence to *Deism*, is so easy, that there are noted Instances of it in Fact ; and for the Sake of *Juniors* in Theology, I think it right to observe, that the *Transition* from *Scheming* to *Rationalism*, and from thence to *Antichristian Deism*, is as easy as the other ; and therefore it concerns them much, to weigh their Principles well, in their Scope and Tendency, as well as in their Agreement with Truth.

P—f—r C—l's *Design* in his *inaugural Oration*, is laudable ; it is to confute *Tindal's* Deistical Pamphlet, intitled, *Christianity as old as the Creation*. — But he does not manage it with Accuracy ; he states *Tindal's* Argument, upon which his Pamphlet turns, but does not give it the proper Answer ; he speaks of *Natural Religion* much too loosely, and in a wrong Strain, and only opposes *Tindal* in attempting to prove, that a Man, supposed to drop from the Clouds, at the Age of Manhood, quite void of the Knowledge of Things, cannot by his own Powers discover either the Immortality of the Soul, or the Being of God, and in shewing, that in Fact none of the Heathen Philosophers had the Knowledge of these Truths, without the Help of Tradition ; and after they had

(a) *Matt.* vi. 23. (b) *Isa.* lv. 8.

had the Knowledge of them in that Manner, were extremely puzzled to explain and give Reasons for them,—notwithstanding their Acuteness and Learning; but does not thoroughly confute and silence him: And in handling these Arguments, pushes Matters too far, and drops several loose and shocking Expressions. You have already been so severe upon him, on this Subject, that I shall forbear all further Censure, and in Place thereof, remark from what he has said, what does not seem to have fallen under his View, and is of general Use, viz. That howsoever impossible it was, according to him, for Men to find out, *auto didacti*, i. e. *Self taught*, the Immortality of the Soul, and Being of God; yet how readily were these Truths embraced by them upon the first Hint given them, tho' they could not find solid convincing Reasons to found them upon: Whence I think, an *innate Impression* of these Truths may be fairly concluded, and a strong Argument may be drawn for the *Necessity of Revelation*, to which indeed all the Knowledge of God, and of invisible Things to be found the World, is owing.

The Scope of the P——f——r's Pamphlet against *Woolston*, I shall likewise account laudable, but never was a Subject so mismanaged: I am afraid the Defence he makes for the Revered Apostles against *Woolston's* Imputation of *Enthusiasm*, has given more Offence to true Christians, yea even to sober wise Men, than *Woolston's* Raves have done. He undertakes to explain the Nature of *Enthusiasm*, but talks of it in the Clouds; defining an *Enthusiast* to be one, who having given himself up to the Power of an overheated Fancy, is mechanically wrought up into extraordinary Heats and Fervors: But this is no better than a *philosophical Inescaiqui* or obsolete, *occult Quality*, its at best imputing a real Effect to a phantastick Cause: He stigmatizes true Christians with the hard Name of *Enthusiasts*, and derides their peculiar Dialect, without adverting to the terrible Consequences of *offending*, i. e. *injuring* such Persons in their Soul Concerns, not knowing it would seem, that they are the only Persons in the World incapable of *Enthusiasm*, as appears, when it is observed, that in the Etymology of the Word, and History of the Thing, it is *bodily Agitation* by *infernal Agency*, while the unhappy Persons so agitated, conceit themselves divinely inspired.

The P——f——r, in his Book, intitled, *Enquiry into the Original of Moral Virtue*, pitches upon *Self-love* as the Original of it, without adverting, that as it now subsists in depraved human Nature, it is *that* Disposition, or Principle, which, together with another near a-Kin to it, I mean *Pride*, is productive, not only of all the *Error*, as I have already observed, but of all the *Disorder*, *Wickedness* and *Folly*, that ever was, now is, or ever will be in the World. Who is it that does not feel it in themselves, and discern it in others, as the Spring of manifold Evils; yea subully influencing even those Actions, which have the Appearance of Disinterestedness and Generosity? I should have been at some Loss to imagine, how such an odd Thought came into his Head, if he had not in his *further Explications* cited a Passage from *Father Malle Branche*, a noted *Jesuit*, acting the *Mistick*, which shews me the true Spring of it, and of his other exotick Notions: I am afraid he deals too much in such Authors; had he read *Monfr. L'Esprit's Faussete de Vertu humain*, which is a judicious well written Book, and duly attended to it, he would not have written in such a Manner.—I shall translate, and transcribe the Passage: It is this. ‘*Man*, says *Malle Branche*, ought to love God, not only more than the present Life, but more than his own Being; Order requires its being so. But he cannot be excited to this Love, but by the natural and invincible Love which he has for Happiness: He cannot love, but by the Love of God, but by his Will. Man cannot find his Happiness in himself; he cannot find it but in God, because none but God can act in him, and make him happy. Moreover, it is better not to be, than to be miserable: It is better then not to be, than to be in ill Terms with God: We must therefore love God more than ourselves, and pay him exact Obedience. There is a Difference betwixt the Motive and the End. One excites himself by the Motives to act for the End. It is the greatest of Crimes to place one's End in himself. All must be done for God. All our Actions must have a Relation to him, from whom alone we have Ability to do them: Otherways we wound Order, we offend God, we do Injustice. This is indisputable. But we must search for the Motives which causes us love Order, in the invincible Love which God gives us for Happiness. Our *Self-love* then is the Motive, which, assisted by Grace, unites us to God, as to our Good,

. Good, or to the Cause of our Happiness, and subjects us to
 . Reason, as our Law, or the Model of our Perfection. But
 . we must not make our Motive our End, or our Law. We
 . must truly and sincerely love Order, and unite ourselves to
 . God by Reason. We must prefer the Law of God to all
 . Things, because we cannot despise it, and cease to conform
 . to it, without losing the free Access, which we have by it un-
 . to God. Is not this *horrid Mysticism*, varnish'd with *Jesui-*
tical Art? Is it not the *Quintessence* of the P—f—r's
 Book? And does it not set him in a very strange Light? But
 I forbear, and shall only make one general Reflection upon all
 his Writings, but especially upon this Book: There is a *wrong*
Turn of Thought and *Strain* in them, which no Explications
 can ever take off. The *Turn of Thought*, *Manner* and *Strain*
 of one's Writings, is like a Man's *Mien* and *Air*, which as
 effectually discover the Man, as his *Stature* and *Shape*, the
Features of his Face, or *Key* of his Voice: It is impossible
 to disguise it; a Man may *sense* his Words when they are un-
 guarded, so as to put a very different Meaning upon them,
 from what was intended when they were written. This is
 like a Man's changing his Habit, or putting a Mask upon his
 Face, in order to conceal himself, but he cannot vary his *Man-*
ner, or *Turn*; if he attempts it, he blunders, and makes him-
 self ridiculous. Hence it is, that very blunt and unguarded
 Expressions, yea shocking ones, will be overlooked by a ju-
 dicious Reader of a Book, or Hearer of a Discourse, upon re-
 ligious Subjects, when he sees the Writer or Speaker's *Turn* to
 be *right*; whereas when it is *wrong*, no Accuracy of Expressi-
 on, no Caution whatsoever, will conceal and protect him.
 In Vain then do Men attempt to disguise their *governing*
Sentiments, when they write Books, or make publick Dis-
 courses, they break out, in their *Manner* and *Turn*, in spite
 of all Precaution.—I add, let it be remarked, that as Men
 know one another by *Air* and *Mien*, as certainly as by any
 other Thing, even so, the Reader of a Book, or Hearer of a
 Discourse, judges of the Writer or Speaker, by the *Turn* of
Thought, which appears in his *Manner*, and in the *Strain*
 and *Tenor* of them, with absolute Certainty. I have insisted
 upon this Remark, not only for the P—f—r's Sake, but
 for the Sake of such as think a *Salvo* in a Sermon, or the a-
 dopting of some Phrases, is sufficient to blind a judicious
 Hearer

Hearer, and conceal their hidden Sentiments and wrong Turn, and *mean* to persuade them, either to *Speak out* their Sentiments honestly and plainly, or *change* their way of thinking, and *give up* with their secret Schemes, and then *Speak* as they think. I know *Phil.* you will think me *hard* upon the P—f—r in my Turn, and be apt to put me in Mind of the *Check*, I gave you ; but I anticipate it by telling you, That I own I am a little fired, but upon Reflection, and calm thinking, I cannot recal what I have said : I *judge* the State of Things requires it, and must not *baulk* Duty, upon other Considerations.

I must not conclude this Letter, without *remarking*, that some young Men of *little* Sense and *less* Discretion, are got into a Way of poisoning Conversation, by *cavilling* against Religion, or *ridiculing* Passages of Scripture, and seem to value themselves upon it, as if they thereby shewed themselves very pretty Fellows. It often happens, that in so doing, they rudely tease and vex some Persons in the Company, quite out of all the Rules of Conversation and good Manners ; and do it of set Purpose and Design, *flunning* them with extravagant Notions and wild Expressions, without *reasoning* upon any Thing. These are the *Devil's Bullies*, they set up as *Agents* for him, and *Factors* for Hell, and thereby merit the Compellation of *Infernals*, which ought therefore to be given them, whensoever they exerce such Employments. If these *Sparks* have any such Thing as *Wit*, they commonly use it on these Occasions, and are fond of a *little Turn*, bordering upon *Punning*, which runs into *Ridicule*. and is usually attended with a *Gigle*, not knowing, that next to *Punning*, such *Ridicule* is the lowest *Wit*, and deserves a *broken Pate*, as well as the other does *broken Shins*. Such *Creatures* are never to be reasoned with, but to be dealt with in a *silencing* Manner, diversify'd according to Circumstances, and as the Rules of Prudence direct. I have *suggested* one Way, which is, to ask them, If they set up for *Infernals*, and want to list themselves under that Denomination ? And shall *hint* one or two more, for the Sake of such Persons, as at any Time find themselves pestered with such Discourse, and are at a Loss how to get rid of it : Not that I think such *rakish Sparks* worth noticeing ; but because 'tis oft Times a great Snare to good People, who happen to be
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ingaged in a Company, and have not the ascendant in it, when they find themselves so situated, that if they show Displeasure, they disoblige some Persons they owe Regards to, or depend upon; and if they are silent, they are liable to be twitted, with being ashamed of their Lord; and of his Words before Men (*a*), than which nothing is more intollerable to a pious Mind. If they are qualified for it, let them say something that is short, pat and judicious, but never enter into Dispute: If they cannot do so, and if their Character and Situation allow of it, let them in a mannerly Way, *beg* to be eased of such troublesome Discourse, *complain* of Cruely, or even *accuse* of acting unlike a Gentleman; and if that cannot be done in Rule, let them rise abruptly and get out of the Company, timeing it so, as the Reason of it is obvious, without their saying any Thing, unless they are called upon to explain themselves. I am told, even some *junior* P——h——rs take the Liberty to talk wildy in private Conversation, on some Occasions, pretending when they are put in Mind of their Character, that they do it in *Jest*, for *Amusement* and *Diversiſion*; but let a *Mark* be set upon them, they thereby show such a quite *wrong Turn*, that I adventure to foretel, they'll sooner or later become a Scandal to their Profession. I have written you speedily, that you may the sooner write a second Letter to,

Your ſympathizing

THEOPHILUS.



LETTER N. II.

Dear SIR,

I Don't think you have been too hard upon the P——f——r, nor can I accuse myself of Severity, when I consider the Offence he has given by his Writings and his Behaviour, when called to Account for them; but we have done with him,

(*a*) Mark viii. 38.

him. Let us consider the Subjects of his Writings, as they class themselves into *Natural Religion*, *Enthusiasm*, and *Self-love*, not on Account of any Thing he has said about them, but *because*, *Natural Religion* is so much talkt of, and so little understood. The Phrase, as it is now in use, is vague, having no fixed Meaning; and it is of great Consequence to state the Thing as it really is, and thereby fix the Sense of the Words; *because* it is become the common Cant, not only of *Antichristian Deists*, and *Rationalists*, but even *Schemists*, to stigmatize true Christians with the hard Name of *Enthusiasts*; the Thing itself is not understood, and it is an odious Appellation as they use it: *And because*, the Doctrine of *Self-love*, as a Principle of Virtue, is exceedingly dangerous, one who does not see to the Bottom of Things, may conclude it to be so, from the cunning *Jesuites*, their grafting it upon *Romish Mysticism*, and from the Lofs honest plain dealing Men are at; in dealing with a subtle Adversary on that Subject. I therefore propose your saying something upon each of these Subjects, in your Letter N. II. The Hint you give of the *divine Plan*, and of its being practicable to collect it into a View, and set it in Light, kindles in me a strong Desire to see it done; I'm sure it will altogether obscure the little wretched Schemes inconsistent with it. Pray then! say something more about it, and choose the Method which you think best; I see it is not advisable that I should prescribe it. I am delighted with your concluding Remark in Letter N. I. It is of so general Use, and comes so opportunely: It is one of these Things every Body practices, but is in a manner unknown, for want of Reflection, and of the Art to cloath it in Words. If you please to say something about the *Romish Mysticks*, seeing they are little known among illiterate Folks, and some Attempts have lately been made to palm their horrid Jargon upon unwary People, for sublime Truth; it may be useful, and will not be unacceptable to,

Your obliged

PHILOTHEUS.

Dear Phil.

Intelligence, as it subsists in *Creatures*, is of two *Kinds*, *intuitual* to *Wit*, and *rational*, and therefore intelligent *Creatures* are aptly class'd into *Intuituals* and *Rationals*. The *Happiness* of intelligent *Creatures* consists in the *Morality* of their *Nature*, *i. e.* the *Conformity* of it to the *Moral* Perfections of the *Divine Nature*, and therefore an *immoral Nature* is necessarily *miserable*. All intelligent *Creatures* were originally *Moral* in *Nature*, and consequently happy, but Numbers of them being become *immoral* in *Nature*, their *States* are thereby become different and opposite, and they come to be actually class'd into *Celestials* and *Infernals*: Hence the true Original of *Penal Evil*. In the present *System* of *Things*, intelligent *Creatures* are class'd into *Mortals* and *Immortals*. The *Immortals* of the *Celestial Class* are *Moral* in *Nature*, and *intuitually* intelligent; these of the *Infernal Class* are *immoral* in *Nature*, and only *rationally* intelligent. *Mortals* are all *immoral* in *Nature*, as *Descendents* of *sinning*, or *immoral Adam*, but a select Number of them, of mere sovereign *Grace*, are renewed, and thereby become *moral* in *Nature*, and are therefore aptly class'd into *renewed* and *unrenewed Man*. The *renewed Class*, by their *Renovation* commence *Intuituals*, and the *unrenewed* continue mere *Rationals*. Hence the different Conduct both of *Mortals* and *Immortals* with Regard to their *Creator*, and their different *States* in the end-
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less World: *Divine Energy* or *Influence* upon intelligent Creatures is certain and evident: 'In *Jehovah Elohim*, the Creator of all Things, they live, move and have their Being (a). *Intuitual Intelligence* and *Morality* of Nature are the Effects of *Divine Special Influence*, and are not *essential* to intelligent Creatures. In the *original State* of Things, the *Special Divine Influence* which produces *Intuition*, and *Morality* of Nature, depends as to its Continuance upon the *Behaviour* of the intelligent Creature to its Creator. Upon the *Misbehaviour* of an intelligent Creature to its Creator, *Special Divine Influence* ceases, whereupon *Intuition* and *Morality* of Nature cease, and *Immorality* of Nature takes Place, even as *Darkness* does, when *Light* ceases. Hence the true Original of *Moral Good* and *Moral Evil*. The *Agency* of *Spirits* upon *Matter* is fully evident to Mortals from their own Constitution. The *Agency* of *Spirits* upon *Spirits* is easily concluded from their *Agency* upon *Matter*. Hence one *rational* Evidence of the *possible Influence* of *Intelligences* upon one another, and consequently of the *possible Agency* and *Influence* both of *Celestial* and *Infernal* Agents upon Men: The *universal Facility* of Mankind to believe the Being of God, is justly admitted as a good Proof of the Truth of it. The *Belief* of the *Agency* and *Influence* of *Spirits* upon Men is universally *facile*, yea *universal* and *facile*. The Instances of such *Agency* and *Influence* in all Ages and Parts of the World are many, and as well, or better vouch't, than many Facts which are admitted as certain Truth, and as well as the Nature of the Thing admits. Hence strong *rational* Evidence of *actual Agency*, and *Influence* both of *good* and *evil Spirits* upon Men. The *sacred Code* proclaims both *Celestial* and *Infernal Agency* and *Influence* upon Men, from the Beginning to the End of it. Many *wise* Men, and all *true Christians* declare not only their *Belief*, but their *Experience* of it. Hence *full* and *convincing* Evidence of the Truth and Certainty of it.

*The Word *Religion* is commonly used, to signify a *Scheme* or *System* of Sentiments, with Respect to the Knowledge and Worship of God, and the Phrase, *Natural Religion*, is used to describe such a *System* or *Scheme* as Men frame to themselves, by the supposed *Powers* of Nature, i. e. of *Reason*, unassisted by *Divine Revelation*: But this is not the proper Sense

of the Words, and serves on many Occasions to mislead and deceive: *Religion* in the proper strict Sense of the Word, is a *Disposition* of Mind, and not a *System* of Sentiments or Principles; these are in great Variety, and may be right and true, where yet nothing of *real Religion* is to be found: A Thing is said to be *natural* in Propriety of Speech, when it is *founded* in Nature, flows from it, and is *facile*. *Natural Religion*, in the proper Meaning of the Phrase, is the supreme Love, Esteem and Regard, of an *intelligent Moral Creature* to its *Creator*, shewing itself in all Acts of Obedience, Worship, Affiance and Dependance, and is competent to *Celestials* only in its Perfection, and to *renewed Men* in Measures and Degrees. *Religion* then is so far from being *natural* to unrenewed Men, that *Irreligion* is *natural* to them, as well as to *Infernals*: Hence it is, that *Jehovah* is said to
 • see that the Wickedness of Man was manifold upon the Earth,
 • and all the Contrivance of the Thoughts of his Heart at all
 • Times was wicked (a); And the *inspired Psalmist* poetical-
 ly represents *Jehovah* as looking down from Heaven upon
 • the Children of Men, to see if any one was intelligent who
 • sought God, and declaring, they are all gone aside, they are
 • all become vile, there is none that doth Good, no not one (b):
 Nevertheless, the *revered Apostle* of the Gentiles speaks of a
 • Knowledge of God, from the Creation forth, understood
 • and discerned by the Works of Creation, which renders Hea-
 • thens inexcuseable, for not honouring and thanking him as
 • God, when so known; and makes mention of a Heathen's
 • doing by Nature the Things of the Law, being a Law to
 • themselves, and shewing the Work of the Law written in
 • their Hearts, their Conscience co-witnessing, and the Thoughts
 • among themselves accusing, or even excusing (c); but de-
 clares this Knowledge of God and Consciousness of *Moral*
Good and *Evil*, not to have produced *Religion* in any one of
 them, to which the Experience of all Ages bears Testimony;
 and indeed, how can it be otherways? Are not *Infernals* pos-
 sessed of a Knowledge of God? And are they not *conscious* of
 Moral Good and Evil? Do not *Devils* believe one only God,
 and shiver (d)? And is there yet any *Vestige* of *Religion* a-
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(a) Gen. vi. 5. (b) Psa. xiv. 2, 3. (c) Rom. i. 20, and ii. 14, 15.
 (d) James ii. 19.

among them? Are they not stated *Adversaries* to their Creator? And does not the *Chief* of them, bear the Name of *Satan* on that Account?

Enthusiasm in the Etymology of the Word, is *bodily Agitation*, and in the proper Meaning of it, is *Agitation*, by the Agency of *Infernal Spirits*: Was it not, and is it not still frequent among Heathens, and familiar to their Priests when sacrificing to Demons? Was not the chief Priest among the *Romans* called *Præsul*, because of his Leapings and aukward uncouth Gesticulations. This is to be found among *Mahometans* as well as *Pagans*; yea, amongst Men under the Christian Denomination, witness the *Agitators* of the last Century in *Germany* and *England*, the later *French Prophets*, the *Quakers*, and the *Popish Agitators* lately sprung up in *France*. There is, moreover, a *Mechanical Emotion* of a more subtle Nature, founded in the Animal OEconomy, which is quite different from *bodily Agitation*, proceeding from the same Agency: And there is further a yet more subtle *Infernal Influence* of an abstract spiritual Nature, by *Suggestion*, *Impression* and *Impulse*, which deserve particular Explication: But these are not *Enthusiasm* properly speaking, because they are not accompany'd with *bodily Agitation*, but may be properly term'd *Infernal Phusiasm*. All these are subtle Imitations of *Celestial Influence*, calculated by the *Chief of Infernals* for the worst of Purposes, but are easily distinguished. *Divine Thusiasm* was peculiar to the *Jewish OEconomy*, and *Inspiration* was peculiar to the Penmen of sacred Writ, to the Apostles, and some of the primitive Christians: But *Divine Paracletical Influence* is the Privilege and inestimable Benefit of all renewed Men, and is so far from having any Thing of *bodily Agitation* in it, that it produces a Sedateness of Behaviour, and becoming Gravity and Agreeableness of Countenance; yea, has nothing of *Mechanical Emotion*, *Impression* or *Impulse* in it, but introduces great Composure of Mind, and Distinctness of Thought, attended with a Delight truly Celestial in its Nature. As for *Angelick Influence*, it may have *Mechanical Emotion* in it, and rise to the Pitch of *Rapture* and *Extasy*, but is usually by *Suggestion*, *Impression* and *Impulse*, and is not to be distinguish'd from *Infernal Phusiasm*, by the Nature and Manner of it, because the physical Nature of the Agents is the same, and the *Infernals* imitate them,

them, in order to deceive; but by the *Moral Nature*, Circumstances, Effects, and Tendency of it, and especially by the Temper of Mind it introduces. *Enthusiasm* then is most unjustly imputed to true Christians: It is indeed Deistical Slander and Cant, adopted by Rationalists, and even by *Schemists*; they call them *Enthusiasts*, because they value *Paracletical Influence*, and speak of *Celestial* and *Infernal* Agency upon Men, as Things they understand and believe. How consistently with their Profession *Schemists* professing *Calvinism* do so? Let them judge for themselves. Who can read the Evangelists, and the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, without seeing the Truth and Reality both of *Paracletical Influence* and *Angelick Ministry*? Not to mention and explain the History of *Elijah's* Converse with *Jehovah* at *Horeb*, where the Nature and Manner of both, is aptly represented, by the still small Voice, preceeded by Wind, Earthquake and Fire (a); nor to say any Thing else of the Descent of the Holy Spirit upon our adored Redeemer, in the Form of a Dove (b), than that it was an Act of wonderful Condescension to unbelieving Men as well as to the Baptist.

Self-love, as subordinate to that *supreme Love*, due by intelligent Creatures to their *Creator*, and as consistent with that Love to the *Creator*, which springs simply from the Knowledge of him, as infinitely amiable in himself, abstracting from his Benevolence, or Beneficence to them, is a *moral Induement* possesst by all intelligent Creatures, continuing in their original moral State, or restored to it, whereof unrenewed Men, while such are utterly incapable; and therefore 'tis no Wonder, if in their Re-searches into themselves, they find no such Thing. It is competent and peculiar to the infinitely perfect Being to be *self-complacent*, his infinite Perfections, Self-Existence, and independence, makes him such, and render him the proper Object of *supreme Love* to himself, as well as the proper Object of it, to his intelligent Creatures: But *Self-complacence* in a Creature, or *Self-love*, when it is *supreme*, and thus inconsistent with *supreme Love* to its *Creator*, is *moral Evil*, the chief and first Act of it, by which Angels fell, producing *Sin of Nature*, i. e. Contrariety to the divine Nature, in his moral Perfections, and

(a) See 1 Kings xix, 11. 12. (b) John i. 32.

and to his *Law* or declared Will: Hence, unrenewed Men are described, *Lovers of Pleasures more than Lovers of God* (a), and are said to *honour and serve the Creature more than the Creator* (b); and therefore I scruple not to say, they who have no other Love of God in their Breast, than that which springs from *Self-love*, are surely irregenerate: Yet I will by no Means adventure to say, that they who do not *discern* supreme disinterested Love, are in a State of Irregularity; far be it from me to offend any one of the little Ones, whose Angels do always see in Heaven, the Face of the Father who is in Heaven (c). I well know how difficult it is for many true Christians to *discern* it, especially in States of Temptation, and how jealous they are of themselves in such Matters. Hence, see the Reason why *Jesuits* refine upon *Romish Mysticism*, it is, to make it palatable, and recommend it to philosophical contemplative Men, that it may get Footing, and thrive else where than in Monastries, to which it was long confined; and because its abstract metaphysical Notions, have some Resemblance of the sublime Doctrines taught by the Apostle *John*, whose Language the *Mysticks* affect, even as *Quakers* do in their Rapsodies. Having said this concerning *Mysticism*, I take thence Occasion to state its Nature and Source, and give a short History of it.

Mysticism is the Quintessence of Popish Antichristianism, and has the Father of Lies for its Author; when it first sprung up, it had somewhat of *Enthusiasm* in it: The first *Mysticks* fell into strange Extasies, and sometimes their Bodies were lifted up from the Ground, and transported from one Place of the Cell to another involuntarily. It seems to have been calculated by the subtle Fiend, to recommend *monastick Life* in these dark Times, and in the Rebound and Issue, to disparage or disgrace the *Extasies* and *Transportations*, recorded of the Primitive Christians, whereof they were an Imitation. *Thomas a Kempis* is the first and best of them, commonly known among Protestants; if his Book is not as much new modelled by them, as it is by Papists in another Manner, I should choose to think charitably and favourably of him, as one who was inlightened by the Spirit of Truth in these dark Times, and pluckt as a Brand out of the Fire; and am the more disposed to think so, that his Book has been of some Use in the

(a) 2 Tim. iii. 4. (b) Rom. i. 25. (c) Matth. xviii. 10.

the World: There may also be others among them, who were not Enthusiasts, but thought justly and aright, and were sheltered from Papal Tyranny by their retired monastick Life; But as to the Bulk of them, I intertain the Opinion already given. This Seck are called *Misticks*, because their Sentiments were uncouth and unintelligible to the then ignorant stupid *Romish* Clergy, by whom they were rather connived at, than countenanced and approved: But they have kept a stricter Eye upon them since the Reformation; as easily seeing the Tendency of their Sentiments to overturn their gaudy Pageantry; and have at last been forced to adopt their favorite Notions, in the Manner *F. Male Branche*, and others have done, to which the Prevalence of *Jansenism* in *France* has contributed not a little, and especially the *Arch-Bishop* of *Cambray*'s turning out, in the Shape of a *Mistick*, whose Character for Learning, fine Wit, good Sense, and great Devotion, was conspicuous: In him one may see the true Character of a *modern Mistick*, who is not a subtle *Jesuite*, nor an *Enthusiast*, but an *unrenewed* Man imitating thro' satanical Deceit, the true Christian in Practice and Sentiments: But so little to the Life, for want of the proper Powers of the *new Nature*, that I compare it to a *Parrot's* Imitation of human Speech, or a *Monkey's* Imitation of human Actions: Sure I am, *Misticks* do not at all understand the sublime Expressions they use in the Manner *renewed Men* do, nor do they really feel and experience what they talk of; they are not however false designing Men, and therefore are Objects of Compassion, but by no Means Patterns for Imitation.

+ I conclude this Letter with this important Remark, That the *efficacious Influence* of the *Holy Spirit*, or *Paraclete* upon the Souls of Men, is the distinguishing Characteristick of genuine Christianity: By this it was *introduced*, by this it is *continued* among Men; and by this it is *distinguished* from Popish Antichristianism, and all the Denominations of Religion, which at any Time have appeared in the World: To *this Influence* intuiial Knowledge is owing. That it is specifically different from *Reason*, and really exists in *renewed Men*, see from sacred Writ. What else does our Lord and Saviour mean, when he speaks of *the seeing Eye, the bearing Ear, and understanding Heart* (a)? And what else does the Apostle *Paul* mean by *the Spirit of Wisdom and Re-*

(a) Matth. xiii. 15, 16.

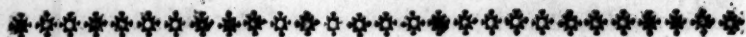
*Revelation in the Knowledge of God, enlightning the Eyes of the Understanding, which he prays for in behalf of professing Christians at Ephesus? I well know an Attempt to convey intuiual Knowledge by Reasoning, to one who is not possess'd of it, is as great an Indiscretion; as an Endeavour to convey by Words to a born blind Man; that Knowledge of Sight which the Act of Seeing gives; yet it is practicable to convince a born blind Man that other Men have a Sense which he wants; and this has its Use not only to check his ridiculous Cavils against the seeing Man's Account of visible Things, but to make Way for his Application to the skilful Oculist for the Cure of his Blindness. See to this Purpose our Lord's Discourse with Nicodemus: Read it with Attention, observe the Force of these Expressions, *Except a Man be born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God (a)*, and notice that Manner of Speech, as an Answer to what Nicodemus had said, and you'll find they amount to this: 'Sir, you think by mere Reasoning to become one of my true Disciples, but you are grossly mistaken: I assure you of it as a Truth, that unless you are spiritually born again, and receive a Faculty of knowing superior to Reason, you cannot see, alias intuitively know the Kingdom of God, i. e. the Nature of true Happiness, and the Way to it, so as really to become possess'd of it.' Remark the whole Tenour of our Lord's Discourse, and the Effect of it; how stunning; and at that Time unintelligible is it to him? yet it proves the Mean of his Conversion. This Passage deserves the more Attention, that with exquisite Elegance, Force and Conciseness, it represents God's Method of converting Men, which ever is by convincing them effectually of their utter Inability to do for themselves in the important Business of Salvation. This will suffice at this Time, from*

Your affectionate

THEOPHILUS.

D

LET.



LETTER N. III.

Dear Sir,

I Agree with you in thinking the *Divine Plan* of Revealed Truth cannot be collected into a View, in an *epistolary* Way; yet if Fragments of some of the great Lines of it be interspersed in our Letters, these may at last be connected, and so disposed as to form some of the great Lines of it: But I will not urge you too much on this Subject. Your Account of *Mysticism* is obliging to me, and I hope will be useful: But your Conclusion delights me, the more that you have thrown it into the pathetick Strain, and thereby forced me into a beautiful and just View of as sublime, useful and remarkable a Dialogue, as the sacred Code affords. Your mentioning in the last Words of it, Mens utter Inability to do for themselves in the Business of Salvation, puts me in mind of the old *Arminian* Cavil adopted by modern Schémists, against the general Call to believe in Christ, and the Doctrine of utter Inability in one's self to comply with it, as they stand in Connection, of the *Deistical* Cavils against *Revealed Religion*, yea against *Prayer*, and of the Rationalists Cavil against *Divine determining Influence*: You know how much they are talk of at present, and of how great Consequence it is to provide *Antidotes* against such noxious *Poisons*: I therefore take the Liberty to propose your stating and answering them, as the Subject of Letter N. 3. I do not prescribe you a Method of doing it, state them in such Order as you think fittest; and if Occasion offers, pray say something upon the *Sacrament* of the *Lord's Supper*, as it is commonly called, and the Reasonableness of attending Divine Institutions, in Quest of *real Religion*; and if you think fit of *Baptism* also. It seems to be seasonable when Men write and talk so much about the Sacrament, to so little Purpose, and when Attendance upon Divine Institutions is so much neglected upon various Pretexts.—Your Answer upon these useful Subjects is much desired by

Your devoted

PHILOTHEUS.

LET.

L E T T E R N. III.

Dear Phil.

IT is indeed seasonable to say something upon the Subjects you mention, *Cavils* pass at present with many Persons for *unanswerable Arguments*, and Men take too great Liberty in such serious Matters. I doubt if the Institutions of *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper* be rightly stated in their Nature and proper Use, and wish to see *divine Institutions* better attended from proper Motives: But this is too large a Subject for one Letter, if I am to treat fully and accurately of *Baptism* and the *Lord's Supper*. I therefore *confine* my self to the following *Cavils*, and Attendance upon Divine Institutions, as the Subjects of this Letter N. 3. only hinting some Things concerning the Sacraments, and reserve the full Disquisition of them for the Subject of Letter N. 4. But before we proceed to it, let us try the Taste of the Times, and of the Place in which we live, by publishing these first three Letters.—

Anticristians, (so I choose to denominate all the three Denominations of Schemists) are sophistical *Reasoners* in Divine Things, whose Sentiments are in many Things co-incident; and therefore, without classing them, I shall state their *Cavils* in the natural Order of Things. The *Cavil* against *Revealed Religion* now in Vogue is, That some of its *Doctrines* are uncouth and *unintelligible*, others *unaccountable*, and in Dispute *untenible*, and the Professors of it are so much divided in their Sentiments, that a wise cautious Man is at a Loss what Scheme to fix upon as the true one, yea is tempted to think the whole Plan of it fictitious. Upon this all other *Cavils* are founded, and from it as a bulky Stem all the particular Objections against its *Doctrines* branch out: Among which this is a chief one, levelled against the whole Plan of Redemption, but especially against the *Doctrines* of *Election* and *Preterition*, that it is inconsistent with the infinite Goodness and Mercy, yea Justice, of God, to condemn the whole Race of Mankind for the Disobedience of one Man, in one single Instance, and not only so, but actually damn much the greater Number of them, on that Account, and for small Crimes committed in the Course of short Life. The *Cavil* against
Prayer

Prayer is, That seeing all Things are fore-ordained, and come to pass precisely according to the Will of God, all Occurrences are fixed and determined, and therefore Prayer is fruitless and vain. The *Cavil* against the *general Gospel Call*, and the Doctrine of utter *Inability* in one's self to comply with it is, That it is similar to the opening a Prison Door, proclaiming Liberty to Prisoners, and calling them to come out, while they ly fettered with Chains, and loaded with Irons, without taking off their Irons, and loosing their Fetters. And the *Cavil* against *divine determining Influence* is, that it renders Men meet *Machines*, degrades them from being *moral free Agents*, and consequently destroys the Doctrine of future Rewards and Punishments. These *Cavils* spring from a blinded biased Mind; unhappy Men in this State, are like *blind Men*, groping and list'ning after *Light*, as if it could be felt or heard; and because they can neither feel nor hear it, and hear great Variety of Sentiments about it, amongst their *Fellow blind Men*, without list'ning to the Sentiments of *seeing Men*, they conclude there is no such Thing in Nature as *Light*: They are ignorant of God, and of themselves, and are Strangers to the true State of Things; and therefore talk in that Manner. To these, short separate Answers shall be given; but in order to their being the more distinct and convincing, it is needful previously to lay down the following Positions, which are a *Cluster* of Shreds, or detached Pieces of the *divine Plan* of Things.

Creation, in all its Parts, and the *Oeconomy* of the intelligent Part of it, is the *Eternal's Method* or Manner of revealing himself to intelligent Creatures. *Happiness*, as it really is, and several other Perfections of God, would have remained unrevealed, if no intelligent Creatures had become miserable. *Moral Perfections*, in the *eternal* and *essential Bliss*, are different Words expressing the same Thing. *Moral Powers* given to intelligent Creatures, are not *Properties* necessary to their *Being*, but *Induements* necessary to their *Well-being*. *Creator* and *Creature* are correlate Terms, the one expressing *absolute Sovereignty*, the other *absolute Dependance*. *Benevolence* and *Beneficence* to obedient Creatures, is a Consequent of the Relation of *Creator*, as well as the Effect of infinite Goodness in the *Eternal*. *Voluntary perfect Obedience* to the *Creator*, is a Consequent of the
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Relation of Creature, and expressive of Dependence : Hence, an *independent Creature* is an Absurdity ; and *Disobedience* in any Manner or Degree, necessarily *forfeits* the Creator's *Beneficence*. The Attribute of *absolute Sovereign* ascribed to the *Eternal*, results from the Character of *Creator*, with the same Evidence as the Attribute of *supreme Being*. The Epithet of *infinite Mind*, expresses *intuitive Discerning*, and *comprehensive Knowledge*, as well as *infinite Wildom*. The *Ascription* of various or several Acts, to *infinite Mind*, is inept, yea absurd, in accurate Speech.

The *whole Plan* of *Things*, that ever were, are, shall or can be, is the one *co-essential, co-eternal Act* of *infinite Mind*. This *Plan*, as the *co-essential Act* of *infinite Wisdom*, and of the *Holy, i. e.* the consistent, one, must needs be infinitely consistent and immutable. By this *simple Act* of *infinite Mind*, the Nature, States, Duration and Oeconomy of all Beings and Things, is invariably adjusted and settled. According to this *Act* or *Plan*, in exact and perfect Conformity, all Things, even the minutest, and most voluntary Actings of intelligent Creatures, in all their Variety, occur and come to pass. The *voluntary Actings* of intelligent Creatures, are not *specifick Acts* of the Divine *Will*, but Effects of the Nature and Circumstances of the Agent, *intuitively known*, and *eternally present* to the *infinite Mind*. Hence see, how awkwardly Men think, and how unsuitably they speak, concerning Divine Prescience and Decrees. *Election* is that Part of the *Oeconomy of Creation*, which reveals *Love, Grace and Compassion* in the *Eternal*, in an apt Manner, and is a peculiar *Act* of his *Will*, and Part of the *Plan* of Things. The *Preterition* or *Neglect* of fallen Angels and Men, in so great Numbers, suitably and aptly reveals *divine sovereignty*, without which *Election* could not have existed, or taken Place. Such is the *infinite Majesty* of the Creator, and such the *abject Meanness* of the most dignified *Creature*, when stated in Comparison, that it precludes all just Complaint, on any Account whatsoever. *Unintelligent Creatures* in all their Variety, and *intelligent Creatures*, as such, are *originally* what the *Creator* makes them to be, simply in the Character of *Creator*. *Happy* intelligent Creatures, in the present System of Things are, What the *sovereign Being*

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(a) Rom. ix. 20.

a wise Statesman smile at a Peasant's directing him to a Measure, which might indeed relieve him from a very great Inconvenience, but which, were it practised, would unhinge his whole Scheme of Government? Or, would not an ingenious Watch-maker laugh outright at a Clown who should counsel him to misplace the Pendulum, or make one of the Wheels of Size and Shape, quite disproportioned to the other Parts of the Watch he is making?

'Tis answered to the *first* mentioned Cavil, and the Branches of it, against *Revealed Religion*. If the *Fact* is once settled, that the *Bible-account* of *Things*, is indeed *Divine Revelation*; what is laid down in the foregoing Positions, when duly and impartially attended to, will fully satisfy and convince the most jealous scrupulous Mind, that these Cavils and Objections are groundless and foolish. As to the *Fact*, I need only add, to what a learned Friend of mine has well said; in his Book intitled, *Some Thoughts concerning Religion Natural and Revealed, and the Manner of understanding Revelation, &c.* That it is manifestly inconsistent, not only with the Goodness, but with the Wisdom of God, and with the whole Oeconomy of Things, that a *Revelation* of himself, his Oeconomy and Administration should not be made; sure, the present System of Things absolutely requires it, it is evidently needful towards compassing the fore-mentioned main Aim and proper Design of Creation, to wit, the Revelation of himself in all his Perfections to intelligent Creatures, many whereof cannot possibly be discovered from the material World.

The *second Cavil* against *Prayer*, is answered by the few following Positions and Illustrations. The *eternal Plan* of Things, not only comprehends *Causes* and *Effects*, *Means* and *Ends*, *injoined Rules* or *Measures*, and their *Results*, but connects them; The *Connection* betwixt *Causes* and *Effects* is fixt, but the *Connection* betwixt *Means* and *Ends*, *Rules*, or *Measures* and *Methods*, and *Results*, are not fixt. Thus, Eating does not ascertain Health nor Nourishment, much less Life and Strength, yet it is so necessary towards them, that they cannot be without it: even so, *Prayer* does not ascertain the Thing prayed for, yet is absolutely needful towards obtaining what is wanted. The *eternal Plan* of *Things* being incomprehensible to Men, and only in small
Part

Part known to them, cannot be the Rule of their Actions. So long as *God's Purposes* concerning Things wanted and asked by *Prayer*, are not revealed, Men have as good Ground to *hope* for Success, as to *fear* Refusal. God's bidding Men *pray*, and promising he will hear *Prayer*, and grant what is prayed for, in a Consistency with himself, and with the true Interest of the Suppliant, is a Warrant and Ground for Men to pray, with *Expectation* of Success. *Expectations* of Success when Men *pray* to God, are much better founded than *Hopes* of Success, when they *supplicate* Men like themselves: The Action of the Man supplicated, as to his granting or refusing the Request, being as much comprehended in the eternal Plan of Things, as the granting or not granting of the Thing prayed for:—

To the *third Cavil* against the *general Call* to believe in Christ, and the *Doctrine* of utter *Inability* in one's self, to comply with it; as they stand in Connection, it is answered, The Comparison of the *fettered Prisoners* evidently *rots*, is *unapt* and *fallacious*, it does not at all rightly represent the Thing to which it is compared, and nothing is more easy than sophistical Reasoning, founded upon a lame Comparison. See the Thing in a *smooth, apt* and *complete* Comparison: *A wise King* knowing Numbers of his Subjects to be exceedingly indigent, *makes up* a List of them, containing their Names and Surnames, with the Places of their Abode and Employments; he *marks off* upon this List, a certain determinate Number, whom he firmly purposes to relieve, and intending, for wise Reasons of State, to make the Freedom of his Choice, and his Favour conspicuous, in Place of summoning his Favourites only, and relieving them privately, as a weak Prince would have done, he *proclaims* his Intention to relieve a certain Number of them, and not only invites but ordains all of them to come to his Court, at certain Times, that he may select his Favourites, and discover from Time to Time who they are, by relieving them as he thinks fit: Hereupon every one of his indigent Subjects carefully attend him, on this rational Ground, that they do not know but they may be of the favourite Number, and so long as Favouritiship is an absolute Secret, they have good Ground to hope they may be of the Number: But in Process of Time, a Number of them refused to attend, saying, as the King's Pur-

pose

pose was unchangeable, if they were Favourites, they should surely be sent for and relieved. If they were not, their Attendance was vain; *These* the King ordered to be put into *Bedlam*, till cured of their Phrenzy: All the rest attend from Time to Time, in the precise Terms of the Proclamation, at these Attendances, the King not only relieves, but greatly dignifies, sometimes a Number of them at once, sometimes only one or two; and sometimes none at all. They continue their Attendance, so long as the Proclamation is not recalled; at last a few of them, having long attended in vain, and envying those who were relieved, loudly complain of the King's Partiality, and accuse him of Cruelty for not relieving every Body: *These* the King causes to be seized and brought before him, and in the Presence of all the Attendants, and of all his Court, asks them, if he, as a Sovereign, was not at Liberty to distribute his Favours as he pleased? Whether or not it was their Duty as Subjects, to obey the Proclamation? And whether or not they thought it consistent with the OEconomy of the Kingdom, that all his Subjects should be relieved and dignified? By these Questions the Men are confounded and struck dumb. The King said, he might dismiss them with Contempt; but their Behaviour being criminal, and it being of Service to his Subjects to maintain the Dignity of his Government, he would punish them for an Example to others; and thereupon commands them to be bound Hand and Foot and cast into a dark Dungeon, there to die and rot.

The *fourth Cavil* against *determining Influence*, is thus answered: After *remarking*, that nothing is more certain, than that this, and all other Cavils against the Bible Account of Things, proceeds from Misapprehensions of God and of Divine OEconomy; and that nothing else is requisite to confute Cavils, but to set the Truth cavilled at in true Light; *Divine immediate Influence* upon Men, and likewise *mediate Influence* by Angelick Ministry, is explicated by the Positions laid down in Letter N. II, in explaining Enthusiasm: That such Influence must needs be determining, without any such Consequence as is cavilled, appears from the following Positions. *Divine Influence* is ever in perfect Consistency with the *Eternal Plan*, by which the Nature and Order of Things is *invariably adjusted* and *established*. By that Plan, the Faculty of *Volition* or *Willing* in intelligent Creatures, and

the Nature of *Moral Good and Evil*, upon which the Character of *free and moral Agents* depends, is *adjusted and fixt*. *Moral Agents* are said, properly speaking, to *act freely*, when they *will* a Thing suitably to their Nature, without any Aversion or Reluctance. *Divine Influence* does not forcibly determine the Will, but *moralizes* the Nature of the Man, in Consequence whereof, he naturally *wills*, what he formerly *nilled*. The *Influence* which *moralizes* an *immoral Nature*, is the same which took Place before the Creature became immoral; and is *that Influence* of the *Holy Spirit*, to which the *Moral Nature* of an intelligent Creature, *i. e.* its Conformity to the Moral Perfections of the Divine Nature, is owing, as is posed Page Line

Baptism and the *Lord's Supper* may justly be concluded important Institutions from this peculiar Consideration, that *Satan*, to whose Agency I impute all Error, has been at so much Pains to debase and vitiate them, and to divert Men from just Views and the proper Use of them. They are commonly called *Sacraments*, but as I am no Friend to the Use of obscure Words, howsoever antient, and by whomsoever introduced, when they are not in Use in sacred Writ; nay, nor to the Use of peculiar sacred Phrases, when they are not understood by the Users of them, as thinking it to be what is properly called *canting*, and as finding it sharply reprov'd, yea strictly prohibited, when plain Words to the same Purpose are at Hand, for which see *Jer. xxiii.* from the 33 to the 38 *Ver. inclusive*, I therefore scruple not to reject it, and substitute the Word *Ordinance* or *Institution* in its Place; neither am I fond of the Words *Lord's Supper* and *Communion*, tho' borrowed from the Apostle *Paul*, because it is but once, and that incidentally, and upon a particular Occasion, that he uses them: I choose rather to use the Words *Ordinance* of *Commemoration*, *commemorative Institution*, and *Commemoration* of the *Lord's Death*, as much plainer, and more expressive and proper, founding upon our Lord's Words, *Do this in Remembrance of me*; and am at the more Liberty to do so, that I see very bad Effects of the Use of *Cant Words* in Divine Things.

Baptism is debauched by *Popish Antichrist*, and render'd useles to its proper Purpose, whilst they *incumber* it with idle unwarranted Rites, *assert* its absolute Necessity to Salvation, and
place

place its Efficacy in the Intention of the administering Priest. It is foolishly *rejected* by Quakers, not knowing how much the Neglect of it makes Way for infernal Thufialm among them; and it is injudiciously *delayed* till the Age of Majority by Anabaptists, as not understanding it, and not apprehending the bad Effects of such Delay. It is doubtless to be administered to *Infants* as soon as may be, for Proof whereof, I need adduce no other Argument, than that it is substituted in Place of *Circumcision*, which by exprefs Command, was to be done on the eight Day of Life. The *regular certain Effect* of it is, to put the baptized Child under the Protection of the Almighty Trinity, and thereby exeeem from some Part of the Agency of Satan upon their Bodies and Minds: When it is administered by Gospel Ministers of a true and rightly constituted Church, orthodox in Doctrine, and countenanced by the Ministration of the Holy Spirit in it; it is a *Cheque* and Bar upon Satan's Power and Agency among them. Hence it is that the whole Scene *Fairie-ship* ceased at the Reformation from Popery; and hence it is, that *Witch-ship* commences by renouncing Baptism. There are *other Effects* of greater Consequence resulting from it, which depend upon the Conduct of the Parent, when offering his Child to Baptism; but these I do not now en- upon, neither shall I make any Observations at present upon the prevailing Sentiment about it, and common Practice among Protestants; but content my self to say, that it by no means ascertains Regeneration, yet is absolutely necessary towards it, in adult Persons.

The *Ordinance of Commemoration* is *vitiating* by Papists to the highest Pitch, and is *prostituted* to vile Purposes by others as well as them, when it is made a *Ceremony* confirmatory of secular Transactions, or a *Test* qualifying for publick Offices. *Papists* have wrought it up into a monstrous Piece of Idolatry, and make it a *Viaticum* to their Votaries, when they pass into the other World: *Protestants* of the two chief Denominations think variously about it, and perhaps none of them accurately aright: *Lutherans* talk of Consubstantiation, and among *protest* Calvinists, some restrict the Observation doctrinally to *Renewed Men*, while they administer it very promiscuously; others act more consistently, while they endeavour to administer it to true Christians only. A certain Church is somewhat popishly

solemn in the Administration of it, while the Commemorants are very superficial in their Commemoration, yet their Doctrine about it seems to have been right, till of late, that one of their B—ps has levelled it to the Capacity of every one, by bringing it down to a common Commemoration, in somewhat of a grave serious Mood; herein acting consistently with himself as a *pseudo Christian*, as I have called the Seck of *Schemists* he is of, or a *Carrean*, as you call them.—I do not now enter upon a Disquisition of this important Subject; but content myself at present to observe, That the Argument ⁺for *pædo Baptism* which I have mentioned, concludes strongly for the Admission of all *baptised Men*, to this Institution, who have a Competency of Knowledge, are moral in their Conversation, and are morally serious in their Commemoration: It was evidently substituted in the Room of the Pascal Supper, and is the true Antitype of it. All *circumcised Men* were expressly commanded to keep the Passover; and with me it is not doubted, that *Judas* was present at the first Institution, and did eat and drink the commemorative symbolical Bread and Wine (a). True it is, that renewed Men only, are capable of feeding spiritually on the Bread of Life that came down from Heaven (b), and they only are capable of being sealed by the Hold Co-witnessing Spirit (c), in commemorating their Lord's Death: But is not the Design of the Institution complex; and its Effects various, as well as that of Baptism? Is it not designed to convey new Life, as well as to support and invigorate it? And are not the Words of Institution peculiarly adapted to both Purposes? What Words can possibly be more apt to express the Saviour's Offer of himself to a lost Sinner, and convey? Then these, *take, eat, this is my Body broken for you* (d): But I stop short, and will proceed no further on this Subject at this Time:

I cannot better recommend Attendance upon divine Institutions, and argue for it, than by transcribing a short Essay upon that Subject, written some Years ago upon a particular Occasion.—It is usual for Persons of all Ranks to judge of Sermons by wrong Rules; some are pleased with meer Sound, and regard chiefly the Tune of the Preacher's Voice; others will needs have Action and Gesture as well as Sound; a third class of Hearers require Oratory as well as Sound and Gesture; a fourth likes a well connected and handsomely delivered

(a) See John xlii. 2. (b) John vi. 51. (c) Rom. viii. 16. (d) Mat. xxvi. 26.

livered Discourse; a *fisib* is fond of extensive Learning, displayed by well applied Quotations: They are but few who have a right Taste of Preaching, and can overlook the most *grateing* Tone, and *aukward* Gesture, yea *Inconnection*, and bad Language, for the Sake of Sublimity of Thought, and genuine scriptural Views of Things. This Variety of Taste, would certainly very often make a thin Audience to the Preacher, if Men thought themselves at full Liberty to absent from the Church: But the Force of Custom, Regard to Reputation, and the Difficulty of passing away *Sunday* decently, without sitting two or three Hours in the Church, prevails so far, as to make the Audience generally bear some Proportion to the Populousness of the Parish: Yet there are *some Gentlemen* of the superior Rank, who *neglect* the Censures of the Populace, and Displeasure of the Clergy, and seems to think it below them to join with the Croud, in hearing a Fellow talk loud to little Purpose for an Hour or two, as they speak; and therefore they never go to Church, unless it be in Compliment to a Friend to relieve themselves of a Fit of Splen, or to amuse themselves where the Preacher is an O-rator, and talks to their Taste. *These last mentioned* are generally Men of Parts, who if they are virtuous, excuse their Non-attendance at Church, by saying they read a good Book at home, or spend the *Sabbath* in reading and studying the Bible.—It is for *these Gentlemen* that this *Essay* is chiefly calculated: Their Motives for going to *Church*, are the same as for going to the *Play-house*, and they would certainly go to the *Play house* rather as the *Church* on *Sunday*, if such a Thing was tollerated in a Christian Country. The Folly of the Virtuoso's Excuse will evidently appear, when the proper Use of Preaching is adverted to, which indeed is not to amuse Men of Pleasure, but to produce an Effect which amounts to a real Miracle, to wit, the changing Mens Tempers and Dispositions; and in consequence thereof, their Practice from Vice to Virtue, or rather from Vice or Morality to Religion, and their Taste of Things from a Disrelish; yea, Dis-belief of divine spiritual invisible Things, to a firm Perswasion of their Reality and Truth, and a vast Delight in them. This is what all the *Oratory* and Abilities of *Angels* could never bring to pass: The Truth is, it is no other than the Effect of divine almighty Power, accompanying a Mean of
divine

divine Institution, altogether insignificant in itself to produce any such Effect. This the learned Apostle *Paul* succinctly expresses, in saying, *It hath pleased God, by the Foolishness of Preaching, to save those that believe* (a). The Histories of *Naaman* the Syrian General, who was cured of his Leprosy, by washing in the River *Jordan* (b); and of the *born blind Man*, who was cured of his Blindness, by washing in the Pool of *Siloam* (c), are very pat to this Purpose, and are therefore well worth paraphrasing on this Occasion.—The Syrian General being told of a Prophet in *Samaria*, who could cure him of his Leprosy, applies to him, in Expectation, as he himself tells, that he would come to him, stand and call on the Name of his God, stroke his Hand over the Place, and recover the Leper; but is enraged, when he will not so much as see him, but by a Messenger directs him, to go and wash in *Jordan* seven Times; assuring him, that upon his doing so, he should be cleansed from his Leprosy: He concludes the Waters of *Abana* and *Pharpar*, the Rivers of *Damascus*, were better than all the Waters of *Israel*, and he might as well wash in the one as the other; and in that Conceit would certainly have gone home in great Discontent, if his Servants had not soothed him, and prevailed with him to obey the Prophet's Directions, rightly judging, as their Speech to him plainly shews, that his Cure did not depend upon any natural Quality in *that*, or any other Water, productive of such an Effect; but upon his obeying the Prophet's Directions, and relying upon the Assurance of Success he had given him in the Character of a *Man of God*: The Event shewed they judged right, and upon the Success *the Man himself* becomes convinced, that a Divine Power was exerted in his Behalf to make an insignificant Mean effectual to his immediate Cure of an incurable Disease; and thereupon returns to the *Man of God* full of grateful Sentiments and half a Convert to the Worship of *Jehovah*.—The *born blind Man* is cured in a Manner calculated to shew the Sovereign Way in which Divine Grace, or special Favour, is dispensed; and especially to set this Truth in full Light, *that* Divine Institutions are duly to be regarded, without inquiring into their Aptitude for compassing the proposed Ends, and *that* Success is firmly to be expected in attending Divine Institutions, be they to our narrow Apprehensions never so improper or in-

(a) See 1 Cor. i. 21. (b) 2 Kings v. 10. 14. (c) John. ix. 6. 7.

insignificant: It is not to pass without *Remark*, that the Man was not so much as desiring to be cured; he thought his Cure was impossible, and was therefore contented with his disconsolate Lot; an odd Question gives Occasion to it, and the Method is very extraordinary; He is not so much as asked if he would be cured, but his Eyes are anointed with an odd Kind of Salve to be found every where, to wit, Clay or Dust, and Spittle, and he is bidden go to the Pool of *Siloam*, and wash, without any Assurance given that he should see upon his so doing, the Prospect of Success is only couched in the Word *Siloam*, which the Text says signifies *Sent*, intimating that the Certainty of his Cure depended upon his going whether he was sent, and doing as he was bidden. It very well deserves a *Reflection*, how it came to pass, that the blind Man made no Opposition to the anointing of his Eyes, and yet more that he did not refuse to go an Errand which behoved naturally to appear to him to be a bootless one: The Truth is, there was a divine Power exerted on the Man's Mind, which prevented the former, and induced him readily and chearfully to do the latter: The Eyes of his Understanding were opened, before the Eyes of his Body, as his Behaviour shews, upon his being examined by the *Pharisees* or Rulers of the Synagogue, or Parish to which he belonged. The Evangelists Manner of telling that he *went*, and *came back seeing*, is very remarkable: He says, he went his Way *therefore*, i. e. because he was sent, and washed, and came back seeing. Happy they who in like manner attend the divine Institution of Preaching, and I shall add, who obey the Command of commemorating the Lord's Death, because they are God's Ordinances, by which Men are regenerated or converted, and do it in the sincere single Aim of being sometime or other converted by them; verily they are not far from the Kingdom of God (a), as our Lord and Saviour's Expression is, i. e. they are in the high Way to become true Christians, if they are not in some Degree already such.—Let Men beware of giving Way to Prejudices against Preaching or Preachers. The subtle Adversary of Mankind, the *Man-murderer*, as our Lord terms him (b), has a mighty Hand in fomenting these, and his cloven Foot will appear, if the Springs and Principles of these Prejudices are thoroughly canvassed. *Pride* in

(a) *Matth.* xii. 34. (b) *John* viii. 34.

in some Branch or other will be found at the Bottom of them; and that *Pride* is of the *Devil* all know. I would not have it concluded from any Thing I have said, that I apologize for all the Weaknesses and Indiscretions of Preachers, not at all, I heartily wish the *Pulpit* were more polite, providing it do not degenerate into a *Rosstrum*: But this I assert as a just Conclusion, that no Weakness, no Indiscretions of a Preacher can warrant the Neglect or Contempt of a divine Institution; yea, I even think it extremely dangerous for a Man to quit his Parish-Kirk, upon a Quarrel with the Minister, be it never so well founded, providing he be an Orthodox Preacher, and true Gospel Minister.

I shall conclude this Letter with a short *practical View* of *real Religion*, for the Sake of such as put a Value upon it, and want to be possessed of it. It is surprizing to see how Life is spent by the Bulk of Mankind of all Ranks, to how little Purpose Men live, and what Neglect of God and of a future State they shew; the true Cause whereof is, that the *Scope* of Life is misplaced: It is with unhappy depraved Mankind, no other, than to *please themselves*, i. e. to act from *Pleasure* as the Principle and Spring of Acting, without Regards to the Author of their Being. Hence Life is spent in a continued Circle of silly Amusements and brutal Pleasures, wherein there is no great Variety, and the Business of it, summing it up, may be said to ly in *eating, drinking, sleeping* and *trifling*, for indeed whatever the *Spheres* of Life are in which one moves, and howsoever *active* he may be in them, so long as the *Scope* of Life is misplaced; so long as *Self-pleasing* or Amusement is the Spring of Activity, Life is squandered and lost: So long as it is so, *Men of Business* do really as much trifle with regard to their only important Concerns, those of an endless Life and invisible World, to wit, as *Men of Pleasure* do, who employ themselves in the silliest Amusements. *True Religion* lies in *right placing* the *Scope* of Life, which is, to *please God*, i. e. to act from a Sense of Duty to him in all the *Spheres* and *Actions* of Life, and pay him due Reverence and Regard in Acts of *real Worship*: Thus all the stational and relational Duties of Life, yea *natural Actions*, become Acknowledgments of Dependance upon him, and so, equivalent to Acts of Devotion or Worship, which in that Case, are never rendered tasteless, and shuffled out by them.—*When Men*
dis-

discharge the stational and relational Duties of Life, in due Manner, from a Sense of Duty to God, calling for them and requiring them; *When* they eat and drink, and sleep in due Time and Measure, from the single View of being thereby enabled to discharge the Functions of Life, as Duties they owe to God: *When* they are regular and constant in all Acts of Devotion from awful suitable Regards to him; and when these are *real mental Acts* of pure Worship; *then* do Men do all to the Glory of God (a), as the sacred Phrase is; then do they *live* to the proper Purpose of Life: But whosoever attempts this without a new Nature, without being *re-generated, born again, converted, renewed*, as sacred Writ speaks, will find it an impossible Thing. It is *hard and difficult* even to *renewed Men*: And hence it is, that *Christian Life*, is truly a State of spiritual Warfare, and is figured out in the sacred Code, by *Warfare* and *Wrestling*. This arises from the present Oeconomy and State of Things, and particularly from the *Enmity Jehovah Elohim* is said to have placed betwixt the *Embleymatick Serpent* and the *Archtypical Woman*, and betwixt the *Woman* and the *Serpent*; and betwixt the *Serpent's Seed* and *her Seed*; and betwixt *her Seed* and the *Serpent's Seed* (b), for so the Words run in their genuine Reading. They are wonderfully expressive of an important Truth, much over-look't by blinded Mankind, yea disbelieved and denied by the pretended wise Men of our Time and Nation, *to wit*, the *real invetrate Enmity* there is betwixt *renewed Men*, ranked under their *Redeemer's Banner*, and *Devils or Demons*, ranged under *Satan's Ensigns*; which *Enmity* you see is *mutual*, and is the only *Enmity* allowed to take Place in a *renewed Man's Breast*: Hence see, how idly some Preachers talk, when they describe the *good Man*, as they call him, or *renewed Man*, as we choose to speak, as having all his *Passions* under his Feet, and quite free from *Anger, Malice, Envy, Hatred*, and the like evil Dispositions: Do they not draw a *false Picture* of him? Is not their Description *romantick*? And are they not reproveable? or, in another View, to be pitied, who talk in that Manner? I might say something on this Occasion *properly*, concerning the *Nature* and *Method of Conversion* from Sin, *i. e.* Contrariety to the Divine Nature and Will, to *Holiness, i. e.* Conformity

(a) 1 Cor. x. 31. (b) Gen. iii. 15.

to it ; and from the *Darkness* to the *Light*, and the *Power* of *Satan* to *God* (a), as our Lord expresses it, in his Words to *Paul* from Heaven, i. e. from the *Darkness* or *Ignorance* of purblind *Reason*, to the *Light* or *Knowledge* of *Intuition* or *Spiritual Discerning*, and from the *spiritual slavery* and *Bondage* of the *Adversary*, the *wicked one*, the *Chief of Devils*, to the *Service* and *Obedience* of *Jehovah*, the *one only living* and *true God*. But I forbear, having already exceeded the proper Bounds of a Letter : I know you'll put me in Mind of this, and of other Subjects in the Progress of our Correspondence, which on your Account, *partly*, is entered upon, and *God enabling*, shall be cheerfully carried on, by

Your loving

THEOPHILUS

(C) Act. xvi. 18.

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